

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 885

By DeBerry J

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Dr. Earl D. Edwards for more than 50 years of meritorious service in Christian ministry around the globe.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly are especially pleased to recognize those individuals who have answered a divine call to the ministry and who have served with dedication, vigor, and enthusiasm over the years to perform God's work for their congregations and their communities; and

WHEREAS, one such dedicated evangelist is Dr. Earl D. Edwards, who for more than fifty years has provided guidance and spiritual inspiration to his fellow man through his wholehearted and dedicated leadership in church and community affairs; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Edwards is not only an accomplished Bible scholar, but he has long been a dedicated missionary, serving in Italy for sixteen years and leading mission groups to some eight other nations; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Edwards has served congregations in Tennessee and Arkansas, as well as Florence, Italy, where he ministered as Director of the Florence Bible School; for the past twenty-four years, he has served as a Professor of Bible and Missions at Freed-Hardeman University (FHU) in Henderson, Tennessee, and he has served as the Director of the university's graduate program in Bible since 1989; and

WHEREAS, Earl D. Edwards was born on April 13, 1933, in Moundville, Missouri, to parents who were farmers. He lived and worked on the farm until he was eighteen years old, when he left to attend what is now Oklahoma Christian University of Sciences and Arts (OCUSA) for two years; he began to preach by appointment in 1952 and finished his bachelor's degree at David Lipscomb University in 1956; and

WHEREAS, from 1956 until 1960, Dr. Edwards worked as the preacher for the Pleasant Valley Church in Wichita, Kansas; in 1960, he and his wife went to Italy as missionaries, where they remained for sixteen years; during the last twelve years of his tenure in Italy, Dr. Edwards held meetings throughout the country and performed in administrative roles, including directing the Florence Bible School; and

WHEREAS, after returning to the United States, Dr. Edwards taught for one year in the Bible department at Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas, and then served for five years as local evangelist and for two years as elder of the Church of Christ in Wynne, Arkansas; and

WHEREAS, in 1982, Dr. Edwards accepted a position with Freed-Hardeman University; shortly afterward he finished his Master of Theology degree at Harding University Graduate School in Memphis, and in 1985 he completed his Doctor of Missiology degree from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Edwards has been a powerful and positive influence in the Henderson community since coming to FHU and has earned justly deserved respect for his many years of service to the university. He has served as Director of Mission Studies, the first Dean of the School of Biblical Studies, and as Director of Graduate Studies in Bible; for the past nine years, he has served as one of the evangelists at the Finger, Tennessee, Church of Christ, and, since April of 1999, as one of its elders; and

WHEREAS, deeply committed to direct involvement on a global level, Dr. Earl D. Edwards also preaches in as many as twenty meetings, seminars, and lectureships each year throughout the United States and in numerous foreign countries; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his remarkably diverse academic duties, Dr. Edwards is also a singular and prolific author, having published numerous articles for the *Spiritual Sword*, the *Gospel Advocate*, and other quarterlies and periodicals, as well as chapters in various lectureship books and a paper published among Italian Churches of Christ; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Earl D. Edwards has rightly received numerous awards and accolades throughout his illustrious career. Some of the most notable are his selection in 1986 as FHU Teacher of the Year, the 1990 Distinguished Faculty Award, his inclusion in the *Gospel Preachers Living History* video series in 1998, and the 1999 Distinguished Professor Award,

bestowed by the Board of Trustees of FHU; he has many times found himself the distinguished honoree at ceremonious appreciation dinners; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Edwards's dynamic personality and versatile evangelical style seem to know no bounds; in addition to his teaching duties, he has also demonstrated his love for God and country throughout his momentous career by ministering on the radio for five years, on television, and in masterful public theological debates and discussions; and

WHEREAS, he is deeply devoted to his family and always endeavors to remain true to family values of the highest order. He is most grateful for the partnership in ministry that he shared with his late wife of thirty-three years, Gwendolyn Hall, whom he lost to cancer; he is immensely blessed to have found love again with the former Lora Young, whom he married in 1988; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Earl D. Edwards is exceedingly proud of his two children, Terry and Karen. A resident of Henderson with his wife, Kim, and their six children, Terry is currently on the Bible faculty at FHU and co-minister at the Bethel Springs Church of Christ; Karen, a former teacher, is active in the Clearlake Church of Christ in Houston, serving alongside her husband, Dan Drew, who is a deacon, and their two sons; and

WHEREAS, throughout the past fifty years, Dr. Edwards has rendered tireless and faithful service to the Lord, his ministry, and diverse groups of people around the world; in addition to the United States, he has also preached in campaigns in Italy, Canada, the Philippines, Zimbabwe, Hungary, Slovakia, New Zealand, Russia, Nigeria, and Albania; and

WHEREAS, fulfilling his God-given mission by sharing and living according to spiritual principles, Dr. Earl D. Edwards's labors in the Vineyards of the Lord have borne much fruit and are therefore mightily worthy of celebration; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we join with the family and friends, students, staff, faculty, and trustees of Freed-Hardeman University, and the State of Tennessee in honoring Dr. Earl D. Edwards for more than fifty years of dedicated and dynamic Christian ministry.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we thank Dr. Edwards and his spiritual family for their many years of unparalleled service to their church, community, and State and offer our best wishes for many more happy and productive years in the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.